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ABSTRACT

Creativity, a means of communicating a personal and unique response to life, should be nurtured and cultivated in the classroom. This document discusses the nature of creativity and, using the analogy of a gardener cultivating a garden, outlines nine steps a teacher may take in developing students' creativity--prepare the soil, plant the garden plot, install a sprinkling system, fertilize the soil, cultivate the seedlings, stimulate the plants' growth, provide ways for the plant to develop fully, market the harvest, and preserve the best seeds. A teacher's guide elaborates the nine steps, exploring the purposes of each step, describing skills to be developed, and suggesting activities for students. A brief list of books, magazines, and films is included. (JM)

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CULTIVATING CREATIVITY:

I CAN'T PROMISE YOU A ROSE GARDEN

by

Beverly Haley

The Place: a typically average classroom in a typically average high school in a typically average community.

The Time: mid-September of anyyear on an anyFriday afternoon.

The Cast: 25-30 sixteen-year-olds (more or less) of approximately 25-30 backgrounds, interests, abilities, and moods. Add one typically-Fridayafternoontired teacher.

The Scene: The teacher has introduced and given examples of concrete poetry and led the class in producing several poems together; now each student is "on his own"--i.e., each is to create one or more concrete poems by the termination of the class period.

Houselights dim; the curtains part; spotlight on center stage.

Bill (scowling, lips curled rebelliously; his pencil waits, alone and lonely, at the desk's top; his paper remains a virgin white): Boy, is this DUMB! What <u>good</u> is it going to do us, Mrs. Haley?

Patty (anxiously, chewing her splintered pencil and displaying a paper with words, phrases, lines scratched out and written over): Is this okay, Mrs. Haley? It's not very good, I know, but am I getting the idea a little bit?

Debbie (dropping an invisible but impenetrable curtain between us): You aren't gonna read these out loud to the class, are you?

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Tim (beaming joyously, working industriously): Hey, cool! Farout! Gosh, I hope I have time to get all my ideas down! Could I bring in some more tomorrow, Mrs. Haley? Could I write some in my journal?

Nancy (teeth and fists clenched): Mrs. Haley, I just don't know how to start. . . . Where do you get ideas? Could you just give me a little start?

Noel (experimenting with a pattern of letters on the portable typewriter): Here, Nancy, look at this! Just start with a letter--or a word or a phrase. Play around with it and pretty soon something just starts happening all by itself!

Nancy (still in limbo): What do you mean "playing around" with a letter? How can you do that? And how can something "just happen"?

Noel: Imagination, Dummy, imagination!

* * * * *

Imagination----ahhhhh, yes, imagination--that elusive little butterfly that everyone's supposed to have some of but that seems always to be playing little tricks, skimming just beyond the fingertips of actuality. At once wonderful and wicked; praised and punished; sought after and fled; bled and died for or surrendered without the flicker of an eyelash---imagination.

Any lesson or assignment imposes some degree of pressure on every student (and on every teacher). But an assignment to do something creative carries special kinds of pressures for both students and teacher. The reason is that true creativity is not just a bit of lace, a layer of frosting, or carefully applied mascara. True creativity is a product of and a revelation of self. Revealing oneself (in all of its imperfections and delights) is threatening, even to ourselves. Some of our finest works in literature express

the fear that discovery of self may be a discovery of evil--Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, William Golding's Lord of the Flies, Henry James's Beast in the Jungle. Because of this fear, we tend to hide behind masks, both to others and to ourselves.

And so, we must begin with something of the spirit of a rebel. We must defy that monster we fear and look beyond him for the promise of a rose. Being creative requires some amount of rebellion, and rebellion carries with it some degree of discomfort and pain for ourselves and others. Rebelling is something some of us are willing to do (at least under certain circumstances) and others are not.

Each of us also bears some measure of creativity or, indeed, we would simply be some other form of animal and not, as God intended, human beings. But many forces are at work to repress or to mold that creative spirit to another's will. Some of these forces are constructive, but many are destructive. It takes desire, it takes courage, it takes mind and imagination and a belief in one's self to use or to overcome those forces that seek to control or kill creativity.

When our second son was a fourth grader, he--in typically nine-year-old fashion--acquired a full blown case of the mumps. So I made a trip to the school to collect his homework. As the teacher led me to a desk in an isolated corner of the classroom where she took out Pat's books and gave me precise instructions for his lessons, the graphic impact of the personality conflict that existed between teacher and pupil shocked me in a way I had not felt from a distance. . . When Pat had completed his assignments, a little icicle of fear froze inside me when I looked at his art project. It was not like the ones I had seen pinned up around the room. Granted, he had stayed within her general requirements, but clearly she expected conformity and he had clearly deviated from that expectation. I suggested to

him that he might re-do the project to make it like the other children's. Maybe he was just obstinate, but his answer was, "I don't want mine to be like the others'!" He knew he risked the teacher's disapproval. But he took the risk.

Creativity has many ingredients that must somehow all come together in some mysterious way. The basic components might be listed as reason, imagination, conscience, and a bit of magic--all blended by hard work, pain, and joy. Creativity defies definition by its very nature. Creativity twisted or thwarted becomes a weapon of destruction. Creativity lying fallow withers. To engage in the act of creativity is to be human in the fullest sense. Creativity is a search for truth and for meaning.

A teacher I know declares at regular intervals, "NO ONE has earned the right to be creative until he's at least eighteen years old!"

Another teacher I know says she wants someday to be a writer. She is waiting, she says, for that time when she is sure she won't change the way she feels and believes and thinks because she doesn't want something as irrevocable as the printed page with her name attached to it when she might believe something different next week or next year or twenty years from now.

What these two teachers are saying chills me. Of course, children lack the skills and experience and knowledge to create great works of art. Most of all, they are still searching for their identity, trying out their wings. Spring blossoms may be more pale and fragile than brilliant, exotic late summer blooms, but they have their own beauty. If creativity is not cultivated and expressed at every stage in life, it it is forbidden or withheld, if it is not made a <u>way of life</u> (and each of us is a unique human being from birth), then it may never be brought to life. Those who refuse the call to creativity refuse the call to live. These are the people who, when they see their life

cycle nears the end, say, "I always wanted to write a book or take up painting or design my own home or do some research, but I never had a chance, and now it's too late. I am old and set in my ways." Worse than this, though, are those who impose their narrowness and rigidity on others.

Creativity doesn't just "happen" in most instances. It requires cultivation. It begins with a way of looking at life. It is learning to look at the world with each of your senses and with all of your senses and your mind and your soul attuned to their greatest heights. It's wanting to drink in all the world and make it a part of your being and then needing to give back something of your self in return for that gift.

Creativity is contagious. When you are with creative people, or when you experience the creative works of others, then you are stimulated and given the confidence and a model for creating something of your own. But creativity is also private and requires periods of solitude for that journey into the self where you must discover your own truth. Creativity is the fire of Prometheus, the vine of Dionysus, the music of Pan, and the light and mystery of Apollo and Diana. It is being able to see connections. It is "dreaming the impossible dream" and then bringing it to life.

The greatest and most sacred trust given a teacher is that of opening the way for the creative spirit that lies within each of his/her students to develop and to flower. The creative "attitude" must be instilled while lives are flexible; once rigid ways are cast, it is practically impossible to bend or reshape them (this condition may occur at any age, by the way--at sixteen or ninety-six). Teachers have within their power the opportunity to keep students open and young and alive. This should result in a higher quality of life not only for these individuals but for all those whom their lives

touch.

Creativity, like all things in life, has a pattern. This pattern is the juxtapostion of a cycle and a spiral. There is the cyclical pattern of building skills, soaking up experiences, responding intellectually and then concretely, and then resting and rebuilding. But the cycle does not remain on the same level. As the cycle revolves, it also ascends in an infinitely widening spiral.

This cycle can be compared to the life cycle and to the cycle of the seasons. The metaphor of the garden with the teacher as gardener may be a useful one in illustrating ways the classroom can become a garden plot for cultivating creative people.

The teacher-turned-gardener must have patience, flexibility, and awareness. He should not expect that all of the plants in his garden will bear roses or even bloom at all.

The job of gardener requires sturdy clothes--bluejeans, work shoes, straw hat, heavy gloves. It requires a strong back and hands that aren't afraid to get dirty; it requires the proper tools, a knowledge of the task, and love for the work. It requires, too, a readiness for the expected and the unexpected.

The gardener's ultimate goal is to provide the necessary tools, a background of experiences and a great deal of practice; it is to instill and nurture an attitude that has a special kind of vision that motivates the viewer to a response. The basic requirements for arriving at this goal are a clear mind, open senses, discipline, and a touch of divine inspiration.

Looking back at that opening classroom scene, we see that some obstacles to arrival at this creative attitude include fear, the pressure to conform, lack of imagination, fuzzy thinking, and a lack of self-confidence. These are the "weeds" that must be pulled or the plants in the garden will be stunted or die.

The garden plan might arbitrarily be divided into nine steps. First, we must select the soil and prepare it for planting. This is the time when the teacher builds a personal, caring, accepting, trusting relationship between himself and his students. He creates an atmosphere of shared ideas, experiences, and responses. He guides the students in seeing relationships and in making new kinds of connections among these shared experiences as well as personal ones. He encourages many points of view, many kinds of possible "answers" to questions. Every question is treated with respect as is its asker.

Second, the garden needs a plan for continuous and quality production. The teacher-gardener must know and understand the seedlings he's been given, at what stage of growth each is in, what might be expected from each, what growing conditions each one requires, and how to plan for successive blossoming.

Third, as gardeners we know a watering system is required. Fresh water in the form of rain showers and sprinklers open the senses and keep them at their height of perception. A deep well is the resource needed for bringing to light the rich underground (or sub-conscious) elements that feed the plants so generously.

Fourth, fertilizer and plant food is needed to give the young plants the structure and strength to withstand natural and artificial disasters. They require the nutritive elements that will keep them flexible and help them grow to their greatest potential.

Fifth, those summer storms will supply the thunder and lightning that ignite the passion and compassion that are essential for striking life into those young seedlings!

Sixth, the garden tools cultivate the earth and give space to the roots as well as prune the plants so they can develop strong, full stalks and leaves and have the space to stretch toward the sun.

Seventh, a "green thumb" helps produce blossoms of rich colors and delicate beauty and fruit that is full-flavored and perfectly formed. (Richness of language creates individual styles in delightfully surprising ways.)

Eighth, when the harvest comes, it is to be shared with friends and strangers--with anyone who will receive it and use it. The feast provides the nourishment to begin again.

Last, the seeds from this harvest require careful drying and storing away to rest for the next sowing, a sowing that should yield an even more bountiful harvest!

The task may seem overwhelming, not worth the price, but with Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof, I admonish, "Don't be frightened!" For even if we as teachers bumble through this task, those students with strong wills and strong creative spirits will develop with or without our help. What we are really doing is simply staying out of their way. But for those who need a little push, a little encouragement, if we would have them be courageous enough to develop their creativity, then we, too, must be "gutsy"! We have to be gutsy in the face of doubts and of failures and of pains, for nonaction is certain death or maiming.

We might take as our motto something de Chardin said: "To see or to perish is man's condition. To see more is to become more. Fuller being means closer union."

As English teachers, whose specialty presumably is communication, creativity should fall within our realm. True creativity is a way of communicating a personal and unique response to life. It IS life. And it is ours to nurture and to cultivate.

Cultivating Creativity

a gardener's guide for the complete English teacher...

CS 203 402

WHY SOME GARDENS GROW

AND SOME DON'T

ELEMENTS THAT DETER GROWTH

Barren ground (boredom)

Rocky soil, steep incline (fear)

Sandy soil (no praise)

Shallow sowing (no "root system")

Planting too deep (no sunshine - stimulation)

Failure to "weed out" (chokes off individual blossoms)

Planting too close together (pressure to conform)

Forced growth (seedlings not "ready" - are stunted)

Burning sun (rigid rules)

Weak seeds (no inner force for growing)

ELEMENTS FOR A GOLDEN HARVEST

Fertile soil (provides space and food for growth)

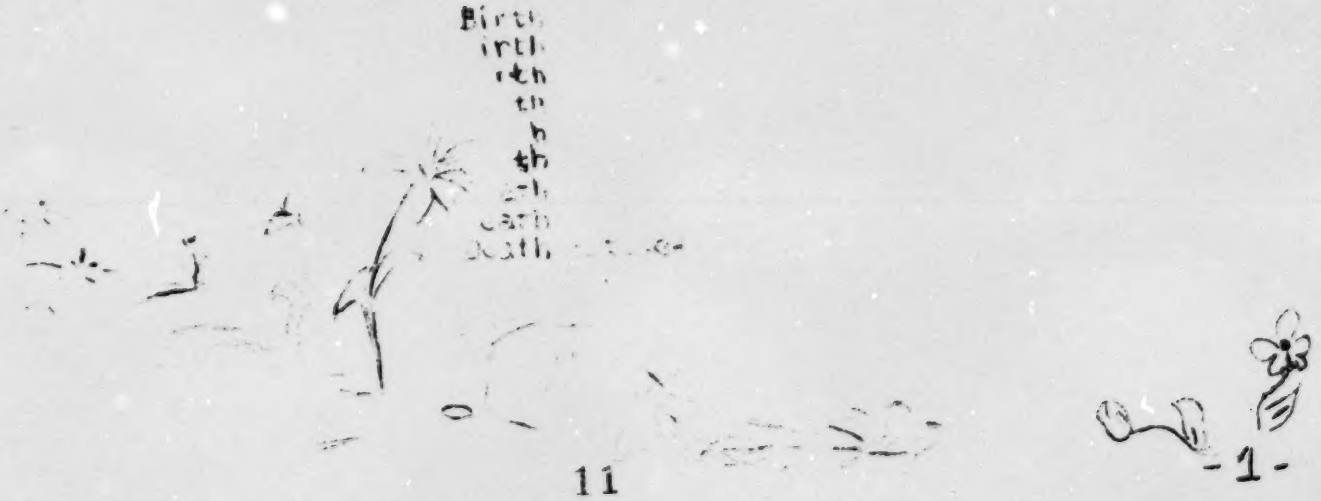
Cultivation (stimulation, trust, encouragement)

Proper spacing and planting (room for individualism)

Gentle, steady rain showers (opens mind, senses, sensibilities)

Warm sun, cool nights (security, comfort, variety)

Healthy seeds (will grow and blossom regardless of deterrents) - ?



Preparing the Soil ...

PREPARING THE SOIL

A gardener knows that if he would have a harvest, he cannot simply cast seeds with abandon over rocky, barren, or unplowed soil. He must prepare his ground with great care and with love.

The Classroom: Color it with posters, plants, mobiles, exciting and interesting bulletin boards, clippings, books, magazines.

If the room furniture is movable, be sure to change its arrangement to fit the kinds of activities you plan for large group, small group, individual kinds of things.

You: Decide on your "ground rules"—what you can tolerate and what you can't—and make these rules clear from the beginning, both verbally and in writing. Be consistent and fair in the execution of these rules, but be flexible within them, too.

Know what you believe in for your students and for yourself. Have definite goals about the kinds of things you want students to develop. Write these things down and keep the list where you will see it daily.

Be aware of the world and what's going on in it. Read, talk, think, be involved. Exchange ideas with colleagues, get ideas from journals, films, students, other adults, anywhere and everywhere.

Keep "cool" in a crisis situation. Let the kids know you're in control of yourself and of them.

Maintain good physical, mental, and social health.

CARE about yourself and others as individuals and about our society.

Build trust by showing respect for yourself and others at all times. Do not use sarcasm and do not betray a confidence.

write
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g

steve

Planning the Garden Plot...

PLATTING THE GARDEN PLOT

To everything there is a season -- and every season
has its own variety of problems and promises.

Activities for getting acquainted and for creating an atmosphere for learning:

Have students pair off with people they don't know well. Each interviews the other, then introduces that person to the entire class after everyone has had about ten minutes together.

A variation of this same activity is to have each student write a paragraph "personality profile" of the person he or she interviewed.

An introducing game that forces the teacher to learn each person's name fast, is one based on the childhood game "I'm going on a trip and taking with me---". The first student gives his first and last name and tells one or two things he feels represent himself (for example he may tell about a hobby or a talent or something special he's done or enjoyed). The second person repeats what the first student said, and then does the same thing for himself. The third student repeats what the first two said and then introduces himself and so on, until the chain finishes with the teacher who must repeat what everyone said. It sharpens listening, memory, speaking so everyone can hear--and it tells students things they didn't know about each other even though they may have sat in classes together over a period of years.

Ask each student to write a letter to you, telling you the things he feels are most important about and characteristic of himself. If the class is small and you have time, the reward is great if you write a personal letter of reply to each. If time is limited, at least return the students' letters with comments in the margins in response to the things they tell.

Have each student fill out an index "personality" card with general information about himself and any special interests or hobbies he or members of his family might have. Use these to help in planning individualized assignments as well as to have these people share with the class unusual talents, interests, or skills.

Set a regular pattern of activities for each class period. Perhaps begin each class with a few moments of informal exchange about some interesting event or tv program or movie, have a brief quiz over yesterday's lesson or the assignment for today (this keeps everybody alive and insures background for good discussions and performance); or write a word on the blackboard (such as <u>home</u> or <u>violence</u> or <u>yellow</u>), have each student write a sentence using that word, then develop the sentence into a paragraph; write a sentence on the blackboard and have the class analyze it grammatically or linguistically; or have the class write for ten minutes on anything they want (be sure to have a few suggestions for those who can never think of anything to write about!).

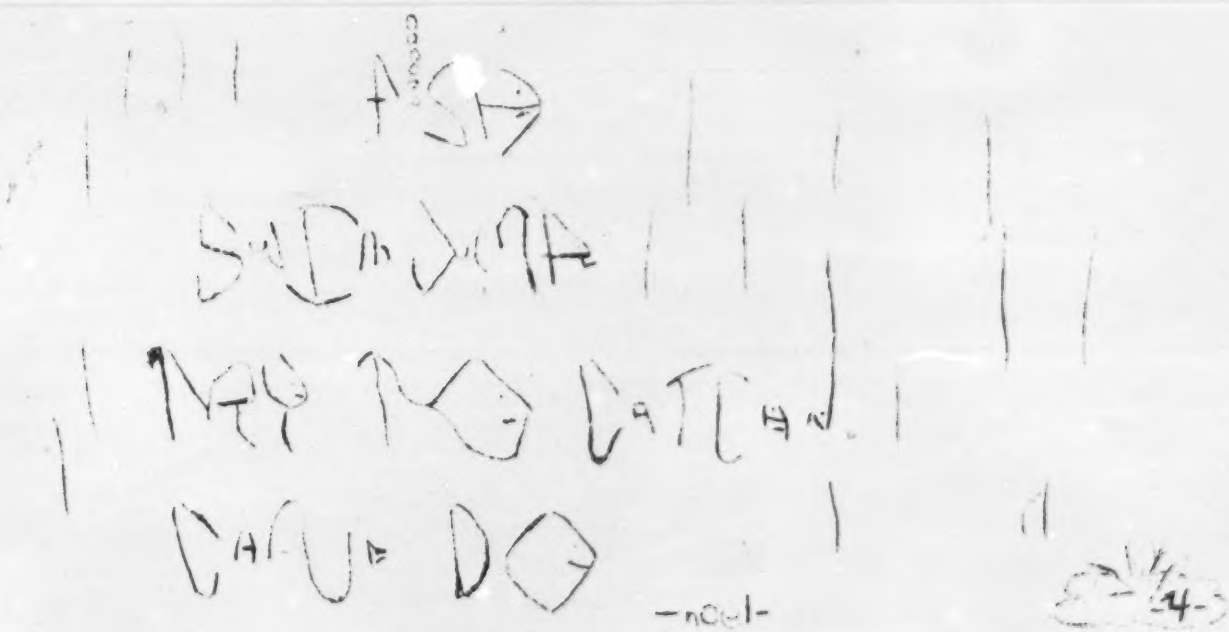
Then the bulk of the period should be spent on the lesson or activity of the day, and if there are a few minutes at the end of the period read to them from a novel or read a short story or have a few "quickie" word games to play like making metaphors and similies or thinking of how you could write down various sounds, or drilling on a spelling or usage problem.

Have a weekly pattern, too--on Mondays, you have a certain type of lesson or activity, an so on through the week. But always remain flexible within that pattern so if something unexpected comes up, you can capitalize on it.

There's nothing like the old adage that "practice makes perfect," so for writing practice have students keep journals. Give them plenty of suggestions, help them to get variety and growth in their writing, but don't take away their need to be individual or to write personal or private kinds of things. You must not betray their trust when they write confidential things. Journals may be turned in every two weeks with a certain number of entries each time, but these will not be corrected--merely read and responded to with brief comments.

Write a sentence like "The boy came into the room" on the board. Have students find ways to make it more specific.

Write a vocabulary word on the board. Analyze it; give its etymology, part of speech, other forms it might take; list synonyms, antonyms; define it; and use it in several kinds of sentences.



Installing a Sprinkling System...

for the Senses

A SPRINKLING SYSTEM FOR THE SENSES

A young plant must open its sensibilities to the world around it if it is to see ways it can appreciate that world and see how it can add its own beauty to that world.

Take each of the five senses in isolation:

Sight: Write physical descriptions of people, of places, or situations (use models or pictures if you need to; read some from writers or other students as examples).

Make collages to express a certain idea, mood, or feeling. Then each student may tell (verbally or in writing) why he selected the materials and pattern he did for his collage, or he may describe the details of another student's collage, showing how the details and the pattern work together to create the dominant impression it does.

Write from photos, paintings, or the like.

Hearing: Listen to classroom sounds; listen to types of sounds without images and try to identify; listen to music; listen to individual conversations in lunch lines or in the corridors; turn down the sound on the television and write what the effect of not being able to hear what is happening has; notice how you and others respond to various sounds (such as chalk scraping on the blackboard, a siren, a train whistle) and discuss what qualities of sounds have different effects. Listen, too, to the sound only (not the meaning) of poetry and describe the effects of mood of the sounds.

Touch: Bring to class a sack of rocks, potatoes, walnuts, crabapples or something similar.

Then divide the class into about three groups. In three bowls or baskets, place 12-15 of whatever object, such as the rocks. Blindfold each student or have them close their eyes and take a rock from the bowl. They should feel the rock, get to "know" it intimately, then write a description of it using the sense of touch only (size, weight, texture, pattern, perhaps temperature). Descriptions are exchanged, the rocks returned to the bowls. Then each student in the circle must identify the rock that fits the description written on the paper he drew.

Pass objects of various kinds of textures, weight, etc. and have students write descriptions of the way each object feels (cotton, screen, sandpaper, velvet, etc.)

Smell: The old trick of wrapping things with different kinds of smells and passing them around to be identified is still effective.

Have students attempt to describe in some way various types of aromas, smells, odors familiar to them; then describe what different smells there are when they go to different kinds of places.

The sense of smell is the most powerful psychological sense we have. Have students speculate why.

Taste: Have a "tasting party" with little samples of wide-ranging taste experiences in food. Then discuss why and how various taste metaphors are used such as "That was a bitter blow", or "Victory is sweet," or "sour apples".

Discuss what happens when we are ill or when old age arrives and the taste buds lose their strength.

Discuss the American preoccupation with foods, restaurants, diets, fads, and the like and try to determine how and why we have developed this attitude.

Combining the senses:

Plan some activities or imaginary experiences that involve the prominence of several of the senses. One thing my classes have done is to take a silent nature walk at each change of the season. The silence is maintained so that it may help each student to isolate himself, to consciously heighten his sensory awareness, and to make his own personal response to the world. Unfortunately, ours is not exclusively a nature walk. Although we do walk to a nearby historical marker that is sheltered from the "mainstream," we have the noises of traffic, factories, and other man-made devices on the way there and back. Many students note this contrast when they write their responses following our return to the school. They often mention, too, their feelings of a sense of freedom as we leave the building and a sense of imprisonment on our return.

Their writing following such an excursion is completely up to them. They may simply write a description using as many sensory details and images as they wish. They may write what their thoughts and feelings were and what things possibly triggered those ideas and emotions. They may write a comparison and contrast--or an observation of the various kinds of outward responses of their classmates. They may write a poem or a series of poems. They may want to write a story or perhaps a protest about man's corruption of the environment..They may relate this experience to some other one they've had that is very similar or very different.

Have various kinds of activities that train them to observe details. For example, ask them to write down from memory the things they remember about their history classroom. Show them a photograph or painting for a couple of minutes. Then have them write down all the things they remember from that photo. Compare lists tc see what kinds of things were remembered and whether everyone saw those things in the same way.

Have several students role-play an argument. Then ask everyone to write down what they saw happen (those who were "actors" can describe what happened from the point of view of the person they portrayed). What does this tell us about the belief that "seeing is believing"?

After describing the actual objects they saw in any of these kinds of activities, or as an alternate to that, have students tell what their intellectual and emotional responses to what they saw were. When they have written these down, have them try to analyze (also in writing) why they reacted as they did.

Fertilizing the Mind...

FERTILIZING THE MIND

The soil that gives life to a plant must have the proper nutrients or the young plant will wither or be stunted before it has even blossomed or bloomed.

Building Basic Skills:

Short periods of regular drill in spelling, vocabulary, punctuation, usage, grammar, organization and structure using varying approaches with examples on the blackboard, worksheets, small groups, contests have a stronger effect in my experience than having a "unit" on each and then dropping these things in the assumption the material has been "taught" or "covered" and that's the end of it.

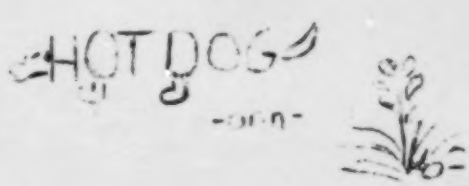
Listening skills (listening is probably the thing we do the least well--because we are too preoccupied with self. It is probably also the most important skill in terms of getting along with others and ourselves.)

Read a brief news story or editorial or essay to the class. Give a quiz to test for details or have students summarize the main points. If they can remember supporting points, have them include those, but be sure they differentiate primary points from subordinate ones.

When the class has been assigned a composition that specifies particular guidelines, then have the students read one another's rough drafts (divide into groups of five or six for this), giving each student check lists for ranking each rough draft in his group--e.g., the composition must have fewer than two spelling errors, fewer than two comma errors, etc., it must have at least two supporting or specific examples or concrete details for each generalization; the organizational pattern follows that given by the teacher, etc. There can also be a check for general effectiveness or quality of the composition as a whole. The students can then make their final copy according to their strengths and weaknesses. This method can also be used on the final copy with the total number of points given (the teacher weighs each item with a given number of points and a possible total as a maximum; then tells how many points equal an A, B, or C grade).

Put lists of items to be grouped for an informative, descriptive, or persuasive paragraph on the board. Have students as a group decide the most effective arrangement and wording for these items.

Read aloud what others write--students, professionals, "junk", all kinds--and discuss which things are effective and why, being sure to include the factor of personal taste.



Cultivating the Seedlings...

CULTIVATING THE SEEDLINGS

> Each new plant must have space to send its roots
> deep, to stretch its face to the sun, and to breathe
> in the clear air that is the gift of a sudden rain shower.

After soaking up experiences of the senses, the emotions, and the mind, it's time to make a response through some kind of action.

Projects for merging and responding:

Investigative: Explore yourself in terms of your family - discover its roots, its history, its individual members, and the things you have absorbed through all this as well as the differences you as a unique individual add to these elements as well as the way you combine them in new ways. Where is this leading you as a person and to your life style?

Explore yourself in terms of your school or your community. Carry on this investigation in a similar fashion to what you did with the family. What environmental elements in your future life would you hope to keep? to change? to drop? to add? How have these factore influenced what you are?

Where do you hope to be and what do you hope to be doing five years from now--ten years--twenty-five years? What changes will you have to cope with in terms of yourself and of society? What will you have to do to get to where you want to be?

Write all kinds of letters--requests for information, applications for jobs, voicing complaints, for business purposes, to political representatives, to clubs and service organizations, to friends for mutual exchange of casual information, thank-you's, congratulations, notes of sympathy, instructions to delivery boys--

Have interesting people visit the class for interview - discussion type things. Students respond to these guests in a variety of kinds of writing assignments.

Have class discussions, debates, role-playing on current concerns or controversies. Afterwards, students respond with a writing assignment if you wish - or simply write about it in their journals or follow-up with an informal class evaluation of what happened.

Class projects:

An extended project of a large class collage.

The class plans a town of the future--or makes a map of the town they live in and makes some conclusions, inferences, suggestions for improvements, etc. from this for class writing and/or discussions.

Plan class or small group productions of reader's theatre (to be written by the students), videotape, tape, slide-tape, class newspaper.

Have students bring to class and post interesting news items, cartoons, editorials, etc. These can be used for general discussion or writing or simply to be seen and read by those who are interested.

Sparkling Life with a Summer Thunderstorm

SUMMER STORMS CAN STRIKE THE FIRE OF SENSIBILITY

> Somehow, someway, each little plant must contain the passion that will drive it toward its greatest possible beauty--and to inspire its sisters, brothers, and neighbors to do the same.

A creative person must be able to feel and give expression to tears, laughter, anger, pride, excitement, fear. He must find a way to express and share these emotions in a way that creates rather than destroys.

A creative person has to be "in love" with life. He has to CARE about himself and his world. He has to see himself in proper perspective to that world so that he neither feels too much self importance nor too little; and so that he can laugh at himself and what the world deals him.

To see "connections," to stretch the imagination, here are a few suggestions:

Pick out an object (perhaps the desk you're sitting in). Be that object. Describe yourself, your thoughts and your feelings. Describe how you feel about yourself in relation to others like you (are there different "classes" and "personalities" of desks in the room?) Do you have anything to look forward to in life? What good things and what not-so-good things happen to you within the course of any given day? What is your view of the world?

Do the same thing with an animal, a plant, another person, a character from a work of fiction or from history or in the news.

Read an item from the daily paper that has possibilities for imagining a story behind the story. Have students write out what the people in the story may be thinking or feeling--what things may have led up to the event, what things may happen next. Compare this, if you can, to similar kinds of things in fiction, movies, TV, or personal experiences. Analyze or try to think what might have happened if the people involved had behaved in ways different from what they actually did.

Encourage students (and plan as many experiences as you can for the classroom) to experience many kinds of things--sports, hobbies, travel, museums, zoos, art, music, drama, books, picnics, parties, lectures—in short, to immerse themselves in life and react to it (don't permit passiveness!).

Suggest a plot situation, then have students write the story individually or in small groups (no less than three, no more than four - and you group them according to ability and personality for good blending) in an assigned style and/or point or view (macabre, sf, mystery, gothic romance, realism, Western). Each group appoints a "reader" for their story. The class can vote for the "Best Story Award".

Have four people in the class each be a particular author or a particular character in fiction from different times and attitudes. Have these four authors or characters discuss a current concern in the field of language today, e.g., the media and its relationship to language, the condition of the language today, the problem of censorship, the concept of "doublespeak," what our language today reveals about the condition of our society as compared with the times they represent, the nature of violence and obscenity in our language today. (Each person must keep in character).

In their journals, have students keep a list of "What if's---" of dreams, of nightmares, of loves and of hates. On a certain day, have them bring these lists and pick out one item to use as a "story starter".

Painting
the
Blossoms
Brilliant...

PAINTING THE BLOSSOMS BRILLIANT

It is the deep, rich beauty of many sizes, shapes, and hues of the flowers and the fruit that turn the desert sands of daily routine into a Garden of Eden.

Develop these writing skills:

Conciseness:

Limit assignments to a specified number of words to force students to be careful in word selection. Do these kinds of assignments at regular intervals for consistent practice in developing this ability.

Write 30-second radio or tv commercials.

Write want ads.

Write headlines for news stories or captions for news photos.

"Edit" one another's papers.

Analyze good writing for conciseness techniques.

Write brief messages for telegrams or delivery people. Practice combining ideas into various kinds of sentences using as few, strong, specific words as possible.

Specificity:

Practice writing stronger, progressively more specific nouns and verbs. Then sparingly add well-chosen adjectives and/or adverbs.

Select passages from professional writing and list the nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs used. Then make evaluations and deductions from this information.

Write poetry--beginning with simple, short ones like the cinquain, diamond, syllable, form, haiku, couplets, ballads.

Figuarative language:

Have brief group activities and practice in writing menu metaphors, people metaphors, machine metaphors, sensory--animal--mood--nature metaphors and similes.

Do the same with personification--hyperbole--understatement--

Sound and rhythm:

Again as a group talk about sounds of words, letters, phrases, lines and how the various sounds create particular feelings and moods. Think of words that sound cruel or soft or loud, etc.

Do the same kinds of thing in terms of the rhythm combined with the sound.

MOUNTAIN HILL 2-22-2 -mark r-

Marketing the Harvest ...

MARKETING THE HARVEST

Enjoying and sharing the harvest is "what it's all about"!

Invite others in to share what the class has done--parents, administrators, other teachers and students, interested citizens. Have them come during class, or plan an after-school or evening program if possible.

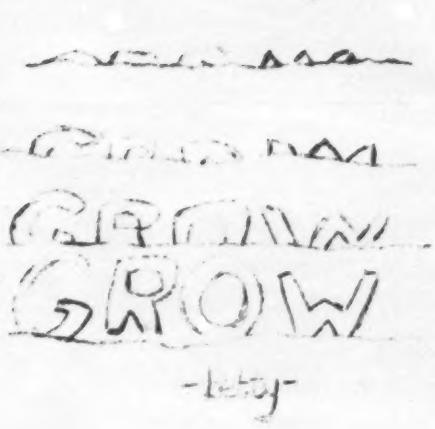
Produce a class newspaper or literary magazine with selections of the members' best writings. Quarterly is about "right" for my class--it takes time to write, collect, and print up during regular school time.

As a group, send letters to the editor, to the school board, to politicians, to television or radio stations, to a sick classmate, etc.

Display student works on bulletin boards.

Submit articles to commercial publications.

Plan a creativity festival. This can be done on as small or large a basis as you want and/or can. For about six years now, our school has had a district-wide festival. Students from K-12 - on a strictly voluntary basis - can enter in the writing, audio-visual, or visual categories. They must address their entry to the theme for the year and judging is based on how well they do on originality and quality. Prizes and awards are made in each category and for each age grouping, in addition to three over-all awards. The presentation is made with a public program. Drama students read some of the best entries interpretively and to the accompaniment of a couple of musicians (flute, drum). As each child is given his award, he has an opportunity to tell the audience how he got his idea and why he chose it, any special problems or rewards he had in the process. Later, the drama and music students also make repeat presentations performances to individual classes at the various schools. The best thing is the bringing together of all ages, personalities, and modes of expression.



Preserving the best seeds...

PRESERVING THE SEEDS FOR THE NEXT PLANTING

> There is a rhythm and order to everything. Writing is no exception. The rhythm of the creative process follows a spiral of building skills, soaking up experiences, responding, and resting.

Plan activities where there is no pressure for grades or evaluation:

- play reading
- silent reading of things each student wants to read
- poetry readings
- music and song lyrics enjoyment and discussion
- informal discussions

Before each new "planting":

- review and evaluate what has been done
- note areas of strengths and weaknesses, selecting specific areas to concentrate on improving
- SET THE STAGE for the next project and let the students know exactly what you want to happen or hope to have happen
- Be aware of and sensitive to individual and group needs so that even though you have planned a "work" period, if the general pulse seems to indicate a need for a "rest" period, then DO it!
- Allow students to present their ideas and needs, too, and incorporate them with the general plans.
- Be on the alert for things that seem to be of immediate interest to the students and figure out a way to use that concern as the "vehicle" for the skills you hope to develop.
- Remember that variety within structure is the key to keeping students interested and motivated but at the same time secure and "comfortable" in the sense that they know what to expect

BOOKS

The Courage to Create
Rollo May
Norton Press
Ballantine Books

Explorations
Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc.
(Domains Series) 1972

Teaching Human Beings
Jeffrey Schrank
Beacon Press - 1972

The Charles Weingartner
and Neil Postman Books

English Through Poetry Writing
Brian Powell - 1968
F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc.

Concrete Is Not Always Hard
A. Barbara Pilon
Xerox - 1972

Now Poetry
Charles Cutler, Ed. & others
Xerox - 1972

MAGAZINES

Media and Methods
English Journal
Councilgrams
The Writer
Principal - Jan./Feb. 1976
"The Arts"

FILMS

"Why Man Creates" - Pyramid
"The Searching Eye" - Pyramid

A TEACHER'S THANKSGIVING PRAYER

Thank you, Lord, for the greatest harvest of all:
Children...
Born of freedom's rich soil, growing straight and tall:
Children
made strong with a prairie sun's orange rays;
Children
toughened by storms, supported with praise;
Children
whose clear eyes search beneath the surface
for what is right;
whose noses detect the foulness of avarice
or false pride;
whose minds probe the entire universe and bask
in curiosity;
and whose sure hands attack each new task
with intensity;
whose tongues speak their convictions and whose
sharp consciences
instruct their ears to listen and to choose
with sensitivity
toward their fellow human beings what their
actions will be;
whose laughter rises out of the joy of sheer
living!

Do you think they suspect, Lord, that
the sunshine and rain they shower on me
bring a greater harvest by far than what
I, in my fumbling way, attempt to be giving?

--Beverly Haley

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